

 Every Man His Own Pope 

When Jephthi the Galaadite, who ruled Israel during a period of six years, had defeated the Ephraimites, many of the conquered took to flight; but the Galaadites guarded the fords of the Jordan and inquired of every man who essayed to pass if he were an Ephraimite; if the answer was in the negative, he was further required to pronounce the word "shibboleth," which means "an ear of corn." The Ephraimites, by a peculiarity of their speech, mispronounced the word and said "sibboleth;" on the occasion referred to this peculiarity led to their detection and death. At the present day, if any one would be considered broad-minded and worthy of regard, he must adopt the fashionable shibboleth. The catchword of our times is "Liberty." If he cannot utter this word in the popular sense he is called a fossil, an obscurantist, and a supporter of Papal pretensions! Yet liberty is a glorious virtue, an ornament to nations, and the birthright of man. How comes it, then, that Catholics are slow to adopt this current shibboleth? Why do they hesitate to take up the watchword and fight shoulder to shoulder with their fellow-countrymen? Liberty, we are constantly told, means freedom of thought and action, the absence of all restraint and the toleration of every expression of thought. But the Catholic demurs to such a sweeping declaration; he remarks that the freedom of a country, for example, does not mean the absence of wise laws and of legitimate rulers. In his opinion, the man who is left entirely to his own thought and action is a slave to himself; the man who enjoys true liberty is he who is best ruled and guided in thought and action; finally, the Catholic is aware of an impostor which, being in fact License, claims to be fair Liberty.

It is to be noticed that the prevalent notion of Liberty is